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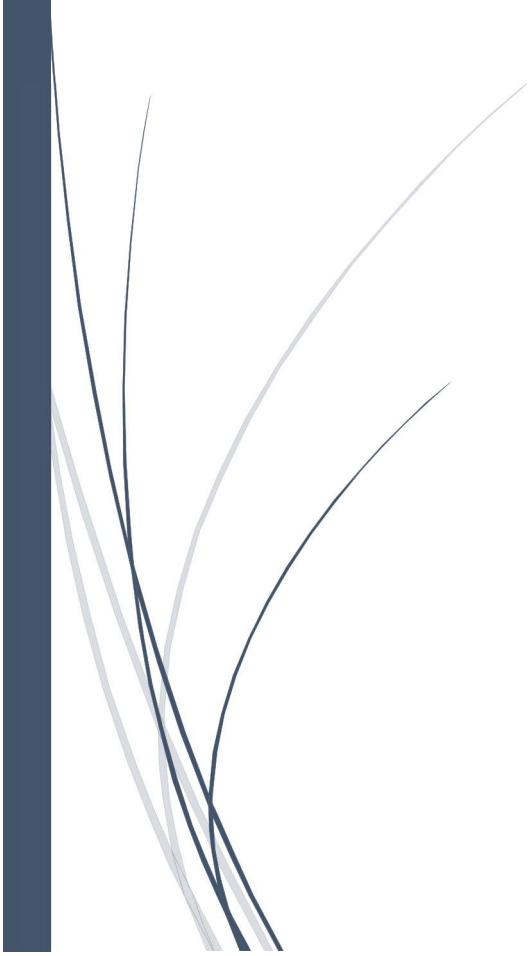

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Contents

Editorial

CPEC and Healthcare Benefits 1

Original Articles

Frequency of Hepatotoxicity in Pulmonary Tuberculosis Patients taking Anti-Tuberculosis Therapy 3

Frequency of Diabetes Mellitus in Pulmonary Tuberculosis Patients 11

Association of Hyperuricemia with Coronary Artery Disease in Gulab Devi Chest Hospital 17

Association of Risk Factors of Ectopic Pregnancy 26

The Comparison between the Outcomes of Streptokinase and Primary Percutaneous Coronary Intervention in Acute Myocardial Infarction 33

Review Article

Health Impacts on Pregnant Females during Disasters in Pakistan 51

CPEC and Healthcare Benefits

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China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a bond of bilateral cooperation between China and Pakistan to enhance economic growth of both the countries. As far as Pakistan is concerned, CPEC is one of the supreme strategies to modernize Pakistani infrastructure and to empower Pakistani economic growth in terms of transportation, energy, and numerous industrial reforms. Economic growth is considered a determinant of population health. It has been noted, "*Wealthier nations are healthier nations*" as they spend more on preventive medicine and on healthcare delivery. Hence, economic gains from CPEC development can flow into health gains as well.

Proposal of "*China-Pakistan Health Corridor (CPHC)*" can be an integral part of CPEC. *Pak-China Friendship Hospital* at Gwadar has already been planned with $100 million budget to provide healthcare services to citizens of Gwadar and to people working at the port. (1) An emergency hospital by Red Cross Society of China is already operational at Gwadar.

Punjab is the largest province of Pakistan by population accommodating 53% of country's population. Health department of Punjab utilized PKR 111 billion at 145 hospitals and 2461 basic health units. (2) But still Punjab's hospitals lack of competent healthcare professionals, availability of compulsory medical equipment and health information management system. District Headquarter Hospital Gwadar dwindled its doctors from eighteen to five in early 2018. (3) On the other hand, China has three million medical practitioners, 0.8 million surgeons and six million nurses in 27600 hospitals. It may be of interest that there are 46 surgical robots are operational in teaching hospitals of China. (1) Thus, there is a need to establish healthcare facilities along CPEC route. Establishment of such healthcare facilities will not only be a health security to goods transporters of the route but also improve tourism along the belt.

Moreover, CPHC will encourage health market in both the countries. For instance, pharmaceutical cooperation between the countries will make cheaper raw materials available for pharmaceutical companies in Pakistan, ensuring cost-effective drug treatments in Pakistan. Moreover, bilateral cooperation through research and joint collaborations will help improve bioengineering, data analytics and rapid flow of information between the countries, coping with health challenges faced health department of Pakistan. (4)

Briefly, CPEC is a blessing for the region where healthcare system will get a boost along with economic growth. Therefore, Pakistan should not miss any chance of healthcare improvement through CPEC.

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